

Kant's Categories of Freedom[†]

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Kant's doctrine of the categories of freedom (categories of practical reason) is situated well-hidden at the end of the second chapter of the Analytic of the *Critique of Practical Reason* (V 65, 5-67, 23).¹ There is neither a chapter heading, nor any reference in any other part of the main text of this *Critique*,² to suggest that these categories might play an essential role in Kant's practical philosophy. They do not feature in any other work of Kant's. The passage – only five brief pages – in which Kant develops the theory of the categories of freedom is extremely dense and appears obscure and difficult to understand. Correspondingly, the categories of practical reason have attracted only little interest in contemporary Kant scholarship. Lewis White Beck has grappled with them in his commentary on the *Critique of Practical Reason* in most detail.³ Nevertheless, there are many questions which have still not been cleared up: From where does Kant take the categories? What is their real purpose? How do they obtain their 'objective reality'? Do they have a systematic and essential importance in the context of the *Critique of Practical Reason*, or are they a mere methodologically analogue appendage that one could neglect in a general picture of Kantian moral philosophy? Is Kant's picture consistent and consequent?

/194/ The present study will seek to explicate the systematic role and importance of the categories of practical reason in Kant's practical philosophy. It will attempt to show that, and in what sense, these categories forge an indispensable link between, on the one hand, the moral law and the 'intelligible' concept of moral goodness which is derived from it, and, on the other hand, the possibility of moral goodness in the 'world of appearances'. To this end, the text will be analyzed and interpreted a step at a time, mostly sentence by sentence. In doing so, a contextually established web of interrelated rationales will be emphasized, and where fundamental steps or explanations in the text are missing or only implicit, the interpretation will be drawn out of the context of the Kantian system. This is achieved primarily through

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¹ All references to Kant's works are to the *Akademie* edition. Roman numerals indicate the volume; the subsequent Arabic numerals indicate the page and, in certain cases (after the comma), the line. [Translator's note: direct quotations from the second *Critique*, unless indicated, use the translation by Mary Gregor, found in her edition of Kant's *Practical Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, 1996. Quotations from other works of Kant's also use the translation of the Cambridge edition of his works. Quotations from secondary literature not available in English are my own translations.]

² Kant makes further reference to these categories only once, in a note in the preface of the *Critique of Practical Reason* (V 11) in the context of some terminological elucidations.

³ Lewis White Beck, *A Commentary on Kant's Critique of Practical Reason*, Chicago/London, 1960. A different interpretation of the categories of freedom can be found in Robert J. Benton, 'Kant's Categories of Practical Reason as Such', *Kantstudien* 71, 1980: 181-201.

consultation of parallel argumentation from the doctrine of categories of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

The objects of practical reason (V 57, 13-65, 4)

Before I move on to an interpretation of the details of the sections of the second part of the [second] chapter [of Kant's analytic of practical reason], I want to summarily describe the most important points of the first part of the chapter. The theme of the entire chapter is the objects [*Gegenstände*] of practical reason in general and of pure practical reason in particular.

The objects [*Objekte*] of *theoretical* reason, i.e. of understanding, are the possible objects [*Gegenstände*] of the faculty of cognition. The categories of understanding, or categories of nature, apply to these objects. They are dealt with in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant designates the objects of *practical* reason, on the other hand, as the possible objects of the faculty of desire through concepts (V 57). The categories of practical reason, or of freedom, apply to these objects. (The objects of pure practical reason are the objects of practical reason which can be willed through pure practical reason (*ibid.*.) The objects of the faculty of desire are, for Kant, the Good (i.e., an object as good, or a rationally necessary object of the faculty of desire) and the Evil (i.e., an object as evil, or a rationally necessary object of the faculty of abhorrence) (V 58). These objects are explicitly designated by Kant as actions (V 60). They are not, therefore, the objects which constitute the aims or ends of these action. (In addition, the corresponding maxims can be referred to as absolutely good or evil (*ibid.*.)

The objects of the faculty of desire are in this respect understood as objects that are already theoretically constituted, which additionally fall under the bivalence [*Geltungsdifferenz*] of good and evil; they are objects (actions) understood as potentially good or evil. /195/ Hence, through the concepts of good and evil, a new dimension of value is introduced for objects the representations of which already stand under the bivalence [*Geltungsdifferenz*] of truth and falsehood. It must be shown (i) that the criterion of this second [new] bivalence can be found only in the moral law, and therefore in pure practical reason, and (ii) that the concepts of good and evil gain their meaning only through this [moral law]. It is Kant's main goal in the first part of the second chapter of the Analytic to show this (V 57-62).

The objects of practical reason as appearances (V 65, 5-15)

The result of this proof forms the basis for the theory of the categories of practical reason, which constitutes the second part of the chapter. Accordingly, Kant repeats this proof at the start of the second part, but it is now thematized as the (sole) interface of the intelligible world and the world of appearances, since this is of particular significance for what follows. Objects in their capacity as good or evil must be understood as the possible result of freedom. The concepts of good and evil hence relate to appearances *indirectly by way of the category of causality through freedom*, in which they have their origin. Causality through freedom, however, finds its way into the world of appearances only by way of the faculty of free choice [*Willkür*], specifically when the determining ground of the will is a practical law of reason, as a result of which a particular appearance (action) occurs. In this respect the concepts of good and evil are "*modi* of a single category" (V 65, 12) (that of causality through freedom) and never immediate *modi* of appearances, since they are applicable only to objects which can also be understood as the result of the causality of freedom.

One might alternatively think that in this passage (V 65, 11-15) Kant is referring not to the concepts of good and evil, but rather already to the categories of practical reason. For example, Beck interprets this passage once the former way, and once the latter (Beck, pp. 137, 145). The sentence construction allows only the former interpretation: “the concepts of good and evil” is the only potential subject of the sentence. The comparison with the categories of nature, by contrast, puts one in mind of the categories of freedom, since the sentences that follow draw such an analogy. And the word “altogether”* [insgesamt] seems more natural on this second interpretation – although it could also be understood as ‘only and exactly’ these two concepts of good and evil. It will become evident that the two interpretative possibilities are scarcely substantively distinguishable: since in any case the concepts of good and evil are through the categories of freedom altogether only [überhaupt erst] constituted in relation to appearances, it ultimately comes out the same.

/196/ *The function and scope of the categories of practical reason* (V 65, 15-26)

In the next sentence, Kant specifies the scope of the categories of practical reason and describes the function which they have in his practical philosophy. So far, Kant has analyzed the good only through its dependence on the moral law, i.e. in its intelligible aspect [Moment]. Hence, it remains unaddressed how the concept of good applies to appearances. Beyond that aspect, actions, regarded as the conduct of intelligible beings, cannot receive any further determination, because we possess no further access to the intelligible world. By contrast, actions regarded as appearances are fundamentally determinable. However, each determination which departs beyond what is given by the categories of nature, and thus also each practical determination, must be “in accordance with the categories of understanding”,* since appearances always principally stand under these theoretical categories.

This “in accordance with” lends itself to two interpretations:

- used generally, such that no exceptions to the (already accomplished) theoretical determinations are allowed to arise through the practical determinations
- in a more particular usage, such that all – practical and theoretical – determinations of appearances must conform with the pure concepts of understanding as mere formal principles. The categories of practical reason, then, are not just not allowed to conflict with the categories in their theoretical usage, but must also have the same number and order as the theoretical concepts – since everything which is given to us, be it intuitions or desires, can only be thought of in this categorial order.

The categories of practical reason also serve to determine actions in their *appearance* as potentially good or evil. But why are the categories at all required for that, and how is one to conceive of this function of theirs? Kant answers this question by means of a comparison with the categories of understanding and their function in his theoretical philosophy. In order to make more understandable this comparison of Kant’s, which is made with the utmost brevity, the formal equivalences of theoretical and practical reason, which are apparently presumed by Kant, will now be entered into in more detail.

Just as in theory sensible intuitions underlie every cognition from experience, so in practice desires underlie all actions. A desire is a volition or wish for the actuality of an object of which the associated representation is attended with pleasure. Thereby simultaneously an action which leads to the obtainment of the object is willed. No action arises without an antecedent

* Translator’s note: my translation. Gregor: “without exception.”

* Translator’s note: my translation. Gregor: “conformable with.”

desire. It is /197/ sensible impulses which affect the mind (more exactly, the faculty of free choice) (VI 213, 30 ff), and which thereby furnish us with desires, just as we are affected by objects, and thereby obtain intuitions (III 49). Just as with intuitions, so also desires themselves are not obtained conceptually. In the case that this (nonconceptual) affection also determines the faculty of choice – because nothing else can be set against the affection – it amounts to an animalistic choice (*arbitrium brutum*). By contrast, the faculty of choice in humans, as a sensible-rational entity, is free choice (*arbitrium liberum*) (III 353 f; 521). For in the case of humans, the affection does not necessarily lead to a determination of the faculty of choice. For this to be possible, it is necessary that there be something other than sensible impulse which can determine the faculty of choice – and that is reason. However, in order for it to be possible that reason can determine the faculty of choice that is affected by sensible impulses with respect to the thereby engendered desires, the desires must be ‘brought under concepts’, or better, since reason is the capacity for principles, be ‘brought under principles’, which presupposes a bringing under concepts. And for this – for desires to be able to be brought under principles – the categories of practical reason are required, just as the categories of understanding are needed to bring intuitions under concepts. (Also, one could never test the desires themselves by means of the moral law for their practical rationality. Only when they have been brought under determinate concepts is such a test possible.)

Just as, through the categories of nature, the manifold of sensible intuitions are brought under the unity of the a priori awareness ‘I think’, so are, through the categories of practical reason, the manifold of desires brought under the unity of the a priori awareness ‘I ought (to do)’ or ‘as rational, I will (that it be done)’. This awareness is displayed in the first formulation in the phrase “a practical reason commanding in the moral law”; the second formulation, in the phrase “a pure will” (V 65, 24-26).

After this, Kant abstains from explaining this parallel any further, and thus arguably himself contributed to the fact that the systematic significance of the categories of practical reason is underestimated. If one takes Kant’s thinking at this point to its logical conclusion, it follows that: As through the theoretical categorial synthesis, first, the *concept* of a theoretical object generally arises, and second, objects qua objects generally are constituted, likewise through the practical categorial synthesis, first, the *concept* of a practically bivalent [geltungsdifferenten] object as appearance is produced, and second, the practically bivalent [geltungsdifferente] object as appearance (an action as potentially good or evil) is first [allererst] constituted. And as it becomes possible to place each cognition from experience under the bivalence [Geltungsdifferenz] of true and false only through the theoretical categorial synthesis, so likewise the practical categorial synthesis makes it possible /198/ to place each action as appearance under the bivalence [Geltungsdifferenz] of good and evil.

The categories of practical reason are thus:

1. Conditions of the possibility of *concepts* of the objects of practical reason as appearances; and
2. Conditions of the possibility of the *objects* of practical reason as appearances; as well as
3. Conditions of the possibility of judging particular actions as appearances to be good or evil.

For the last [(3)], *in addition* the practical faculty of judgment is required, as Kant explains in the section entitled “On the Typic of Pure Practical Judgment”, which follows the passage on the categories of practical reason.

Consequently, when Beck (p. 139) writes, “The elementary practical concepts are just the concepts of good and evil in general, and the rules [i.e. the categories of freedom, p. 139] spell out their use in the synthesis of desires, observance of these rules being necessary for the conversion of desire into rational desire, or will,” this missteps. The categories cannot *transform* desires [Begierde] into rational desires [vernünftiges Begehren]. The fact that only by applying these categories, and by consequently obtaining the notion of a possible good action, can one also subsequently change one’s maxims, using the moral law as a criterion, is in relation to the categories a secondary after-effect. The categories are, as has been shown, already needed much earlier on [in the account].

The objective reality of the categories of practical reason (V 65, 27-66, 11)

After Kant has explained the function and scope of the categories of practical reasons, he takes up the challenge of the proof of the objective reality of these categories in the next paragraph (V 65, 27ff). That the categories of practical reason maintain objective reality, or, as says Kant in this paragraph, become (practical) cognitions or achieve meaning (in application to objects), is to say: they actually apply to objects.⁴ Hence, in a proof of the objective reality of the categories of practical reason, it must also be shown that there are objects which /199/ are determined through these categories, [or] that there can be such at least in principle.

In this paragraph, too, Kant proceeds methodologically in such a way that he carries out each individual step of reasoning in demarcation against the relevant piece of theory from the *Critique of Pure Reason*. The categories of nature are, without being applied to something else (intuitions), mere forms of thought, i.e., they do not yet have objective reality. To obtain objective reality, they must be applied to *intuitions*. However, since these are sensibly conditioned, and therefore originate from a faculty different from the understanding, namely receptivity, the categories must first, with the help of the imagination, be schematized over the ‘underlying’ form of intuition, in order for it to be possible for them only then to apply to intuitions and thereby to obtain objective reality.

Likewise one can say that, without being applied to something, the categories of practical reason, too, are mere (practical) forms of thought; that is to say, they only yield the *concept* of a practical object as appearance. It must still be shown that there *are* practical objects, i.e., their objective reality must be proved. It is not primarily intuition that the categories of practical reason must relate to in order to be applicable, as with the theoretical categories, but rather free choice. (Kant has already explained this in the preceding paragraph.) Now choice is only *free* choice when a pure practical law grounds it a priori. And that means, firstly, that the categories of practical reason must be applied to something (the supreme principle of freedom) which itself lies in reason, i.e. in “the thinking faculty itself” (V 66, 2), and therefore in the same faculty which spawns the categories. The *form of pure will* appears here in place of the form of intuition taken from sensibility. In this respect, no schematism is required. This is the first point that Kant notes: the advantage that the categories of practical reason do not need to be schematized. The second is that it is required that the supreme principle of freedom is *given*. For only thus – through its being given or being a fact⁵ – does it fulfil the condition that the categories relate to something actual, and can therefore actually obtain application to objects.

⁴ With respect to the Kantian term ‘objective reality’, see, e.g., III 144, 15f [A155/B194]: “to have objective reality, i.e., to be related to an object, and is to have significance and sense in that object?”. With respect to *practical* objective reality, compare V 56.

⁵ On Kant’s equating the determinations that the moral law is a *fact* and that it is *given*, see, e.g., V 31, 31ff.

Therefore, the moral law first, as the form of pure will, adopts the function which the forms of intuition occupy; and second, as fact, it adopts the function /200/ which intuitions occupy *in the proof of the objective reality of categories* of nature (categories of understanding).

After this, Kant explains why the categories of practical reason do not at all require their own particular “intuitions” (V 66, 3-6) to achieve objective reality.⁶ These are not exactly new thoughts. Kant is merely repeating what has already been shown at an earlier point (V 57f), the result of which is one of the presuppositions which is required for the present proof of the objective reality of the categories. In order for it to be possible for an action to be correctly assigned to the determination good or evil, it is not necessary that one knows whether, or can prove that, in the ‘world of appearances’ all the conditions are met for it to be possible for this action to actually also be performed. For if an action can be thought of as determined by a rational (i.e. free) will, then it is good; and therefore only this must be shown, if one wants to show that an action is good. To show that an action is evil, it must likewise be shown that the action conflicts with the moral law. Actions are therefore not determined as good or evil due to their conformity with intuitions – as judgments of experience are determined as true or false – but rather solely due to their relation to the moral law, and this relation is quite independent of all conditions of nature. In this respect they have to do only with the “determinations of the will”, and not with the “conditions of nature.”

After Kant has called these additional conditions to mind, he – finally – indicates where the previous observations in the passage lead, i.e. with what purpose he invokes them here: the categories of practical reason, *if* one applies them to the supreme principle of freedom (as given), *at once* become cognitions, i.e. achieve objective practical reality (see above).

Thereafter, to conclude these thoughts, Kant provides another explanation of *why* the categories of practical reason obtain objective reality *in this way*, by showing to which mutual relation of the mentioned parameters this is due: “they themselves produce the reality of that to which they refer (the disposition of the will)” (V 66, 10f).

This is noteworthy (“merk-würdig”) since it is for the categories of nature – and also, of course, for empirical concepts – quite unthinkable; even the entirety of the categories of nature, even when they are schematized, still produce not yet the tiniest bit of the reality of the objects of nature. Theoretical reality is impossible without sensible intuitions.

/201/ Before I interpret Kant’s (unfortunately not further explained) final part of the sentence in its totality, I will straighten out a few problems of detail.

- The pronoun in the subject-position of the causal clause (“they”) must be understood such that it stands for the entire preceding expression “the practical a priori concepts [i.e. the categories of practical reason] *in relation to the supreme principle of freedom* [i.e. the moral law].” For without this relation to the moral law, the categories of practical reason can produce nothing – they are then mere (empty) concepts (see above).

How Beck arrives at the claim that the categories of practical reason are “in themselves cognitions” (p. 143), i.e. “direct cognitions of what ought to be” (p. 141), is to me incomprehensible. His rationale – “because they arise from the same reason as that which presents the fact to be rendered intelligible” (p. 143) – explains absolutely nothing. For this source [from which they arise] is reason, and not everything which has its source in reason is in itself already a cognition. And Beck’s second

⁶ Nevertheless, the practical categories require of course intuitions – and also desires – to be able to be applied at all in a practical respect to appearances (see above).

rationale – “because they are consequences of a primordial fact” (p. 141; Beck means here the fact of reason) has no equivalent in the text. Kant only says that the fact underlies the categories of practical reason, as the form of intuition underlies the categories of nature (c.f. V 65-66). Finally, Kant himself writes that the categories of practical reason, if they are applied to the moral law, *become* cognitions, from which one may easily conclude that they are, in and of themselves, *not* cognitions.

- What Kant means by a “disposition of the will” [Willensgesinnung] is also in need of explanation. Following parts of the *Groundwork* and the *Critique of Practical Reason* where they are called “dispositions, that is, [...] maxims of the will” (IV 435, 15f) and “dispositions or maxims” (V 56, 25), one can presumably assume an equation of ‘disposition of the will’ and ‘maxim of the will’ here. Dispositions of the will can therefore be rational maxims or, in a weaker sense, practically bivalent [geltungsdifferent] maxims – analogously to the ambiguity of the term ‘will’ in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. Since the talk is here of maxims or dispositions, but on the other hand the concept of a maxim also appears as one of the categories, one must not let oneself be misled. For in the case of the ‘maxim’ as a category only its aspect of quantity is taken into account. For the fully determined concept of a (rational) maxim (or maxim that is practically bivalent [geltungsdifferent]), additionally, amongst other things, practical categories of quality, relation and modality are required.⁷

Beck seems to equate ‘disposition of the will’ with ‘respect for the moral law’, for he claims that the object which the categories of practical reason /202/ produce the reality of is respect for the moral law (p. 141). He does not give any rationale for this claim. It is easily shown, however, that Kant cannot have been thinking of respect: respect for the law is a *feeling* (see V 73, 74; IV 401, 19, amongst other passages), and that the categories of practical reason a) should relate to a feeling, and b) should obtain objective reality through the creation of the reality of this feeling, is already in itself a rather audacious thought. Moreover, Kant himself, in the third chapter of the *Critique of Practical Reason*, very comprehensively details how this feeling of respect arises: it is produced (“effected”) by the moral law alone, which already presupposes the determinability of the faculty of choice by reason (V 75f). The categories of practical reason, therefore, are not (directly) needed for this.

- Finally, one would expect as a result of the preceding section (and the following table of the categories), that it is *actions*, but not dispositions or maxims, to which the categories of practical reason relate. This, however, is only an apparent discrepancy. For, in the context of practical philosophy, for Kant ‘action’ always means an event as a case of an envisaged general rule. So for an action as appearance to be an action, and not a mere mechanically caused event in the world, it must be (possible for it to be) thought of as falling under a rule of action, or maxim. The categories of practical reason therefore determine actions as possibly good or bad through the relevant underlying maxims. In this vein, Kant also says that good or evil is “strictly speaking, referred to actions”, but that “only the kind of action, the maxim of the will” can be “good or evil absolutely” (V 60, 19-25).

I will now try to interpret the (partial) sentence under discussion in two steps, by means of the following questions. a) What does it mean to say that the categories of practical reason – applied to the moral law – produce the reality [Wirklichkeit] of the disposition of the will? b) Why is this the reason that the categories of practical reason achieve objective reality [objective Realität]?

Regarding a)

⁷ Compare also, below, the remarks on the individual categories.

The categories of practical reason taken in and of themselves establish only the indeterminate concept of an action as appearance in general that is practically bivalent [praktisch geltungsdifferent]. The categories, applied to the moral law as the ‘form of pure will’ or ‘form of rational practical laws’, i.e. *as the criterion for good or evil actions*, establish the material, or with regard to content determined, (general) concept of a practically bivalent [geltungsdifferent] action as appearance. Still, though, nothing has thereby been accounted for regarding the reality of such good or evil actions as appearances. The reality of a practically bivalent [geltungsdifferent] action as appearance can only be achieved through the application of the categories to the moral law as fact, or as given. That the moral law is a (the) fact /203/ of pure reason means that we as rational beings have a necessary awareness that through the moral law we are obligated with respect to our volitions and actions. However, in order for us to be able to be aware of this, that we should perform actions *as appearances* according to rational laws, we already require the categories of practical reason. For, that one ought to do an action as appearance means that one ought to act as a person in a particular state [Zustand*], following particular maxims, that, for example, require the commission or omission of an action, etc. Equally, on the other hand, a free action as appearance – or action as appearance determined through reason – is unthinkable without the categories of practical reason: it is always the action of a person, in a particular state, through a practical law, etc. Thus, a free action as appearance already stands under the categories of practical reason.

One can therefore say in at least two respects, that only the categories of practical reason – applied to the moral law as fact – produce in practical thought the reality of rational maxims, and thereby the reality of [practically] bivalent [geltungsdifferent] maxims and actions, regarded as appearances.⁸

This also explains (amongst other things) what was already noted above, namely that the categories of practical reason are not only conditions of the possibility of the concept of a practically bivalent [geltungsdifferent] action, but also conditions of the possibility of good or evil actions themselves.

Regarding b)

It still remains to answer why the fact that only the categories of practical reason, applied to the moral law as fact, make possible the reality of (rational) maxims (or bivalent [geltungsdifferent] maxims) constitutes the reason for the objective reality of these categories. This is now relatively easy to show. The categories, when applied to the moral law as fact, produce the reality [Wirklichkeit] in practical thought of practically bivalent [geltungsdifferent] maxims and action. Consequently, if that /204/ to which the categories of practical reason relate (what they co-constitute) is actual, that is synonymous with saying

* Translator’s note: ‘Zustand’ can also be translated as ‘condition’. In what follows I always translate it as ‘state’, to prevent it from being confused with a condition in the sense of (e.g.) a necessary condition for something [Bedingung].

⁸ Benton thinks that maxims are – as causal rules – already given with the representation of actions and so already available for the practical categories in their significance for the will to an action. The manifold of desires of which Kant speaks is for Benton just the manifold of these given maxims (it is therefore not sensible), and the unifying function of the categories is to bring given maxims under the unity of the will. Thereby, the categories are only required for one’s choosing from the given maxims certain ones *as one’s own* (Benton, pp. 194-198). How one is supposed to be able to think or comprehend the maxims, without presupposing the practical categories, Benton does not say. It also remains unclear why the categories are supposed to be required (only) for the choice of a maxim as *my* maxim. One would like to think that, on this interpretation of the function of the categories of practical reason, one could dispense with the categories entirely.

that there *are* objects to which the categories find application – and that means that the categories have objective reality [objective Realität].

After Kant has in this way shown the objective reality of the categories generally, he turns in what follows to presenting the table of categories and to giving the different functions of each group of categories.⁹

The categories and principles of freedom in relation to the concepts of good and evil applied to actions as appearances (V 66, 16-36)

Since the categories do not need to be schematized, Kant implicitly provides in his table of the categories a corresponding table of principles [Grundsätze]. However, it is not the case that, as Beck assumes (pp. 145ff), Kant himself features categories and principles mixed together *in his table*.

Beck claims (p. 145) that Kant “does not clearly distinguish between the judgments and the concepts, so that in the table we find sometimes one and sometimes the other” (see also Beck, p. 139). Beck then distinguishes “principle or rule from category or concept of the good,” and tries to complete what is absent (p. 145). Beck here mixes up, amongst other things, ‘practical judgments’ and ‘principles’ (pp. 144ff). Kant is not talking of a table of practical judgments, however, and there are also no indications that he had thought of the possibility of such a table. Kant sets out from the *categories* of pure understanding. This is justified by two reasons:

- a) He is concerned here with the determination of appearances, but with regard to a practical determination.
- b) Even when they are not applied to intuitions (schematized), the categories of pure understanding have significance, namely as mere forms of thought, through which the faculty human understanding, as discursively cognizing, must think of everything, regardless of what it thinks.

The table of categories itself actually provides only *concepts* (categories) – the concept of a maxim, of a rule of commission, of the relation of action and personality, of the permitted, etc. If one wants to obtain the corresponding principles from these categories, objective reality must be provided to them, i.e., they must be applied to the moral law as fact (see above).

/205/ Beck’s suggestion of invoking, apart from the categories, principles (but not practical forms of judgment!) will now be adopted. To avoid possible misunderstanding, the following are noted in advance in full clarity:

- These principles must not be confused or mixed up with *the* (supreme) principle of morals, of which there is only one, and which to start with does not directly relate to appearances at all.
- Equally, these principles are *not* some other *practical statements* or practical principles, that is, statements which express an ‘ought’ (‘may’, ‘may not’, etc). Rather, they are theoretical statements, that is, statements which assert something, which provide the conditions under which an action in its appearance can be understood as good, or can be good.
- Kant himself nowhere explicitly speaks of such principles. However, these principles – as those of theoretical reason – have, with systematic necessity, their place in the present theoretical context of practically bivalent [geltungsdifferent] actions as appearances.

⁹ The last sentence of the subsection before the table of the categories is discussed subsequent to my representation of the table.

To find out how, in following Kant, these principles would have to be stated, Kant's remark that the table of categories is "intelligible enough in itself" (V 67, 13) shall be interpreted such that Kant deemed no further elucidation necessary because he wanted to establish the table as being directly analogous to the table of categories of the concepts of pure understanding. Correspondingly, the principles too should be formally analogous to the theoretical principles.

In the following, first, an annotated version of the table of categories, and the corresponding table of principles, as it follows the theoretical principles by analogy, will be presented. Following this, Kant's remarks on the differentiation of the individual categories and principles will be analyzed, and explanations of the individual categories and principles will be provided.

Categories of practical reason applied to appearances as the possible result of freedom

The categories of freedom invoked by Kant do not require any schemata. They can, if one grounds them in the moral law, immediately be applied to appearances. One does not, then, obtain twelve different concepts of the good through them (as Beck assumes, pp. 144ff). Rather, the categories are together the individually necessary conditions of *one* concept of (moral) good, when it is applied to (actions as) appearances. If one introduces both the concept of actions as appearances, and also the concept of the good, in the table of categories, one obtains the following double-table: /206/

1. Quantity

- a) Action as appearance thought of as standing under a maxim
- b) Action as appearance thought of as standing under a practical precept
- c) Action as appearance thought of as standing under a practical law

- a) Good for an individual (who has the maxim)
- b) Good for many individuals (who are in accord regarding a tendency which constitutes the condition of the hypothetical precept)
- c) Good for all individuals

The necessary condition of a possible good action here is the quantity ("extension") of individuals for which the action is good.

2. Quality

- a) Action as appearance thought of as standing under a rule of commission
- b) Action as appearance thought of as standing under a rule of omission
- c) Action of appearance thought of as standing under a rule of exceptions

- a) Real good
- b) The negation of a good
- c) Real good under a determinate limiting condition

3. Relation

- a) Action as appearance thought of as the action of a personality [Persönlichkeit]*

* Translator's note: 'Persönlichkeit' can also be translated as 'personhood', that is, in this context, the action of someone with the standing of a person.

- b) Action as appearance thought of as the result (“effect”) of the state of the person
- c) Action as appearance thought of as standing in interaction with other people (or their actions)

- a) Good as good through a personality
- b) Good as good in the context of the state of the person
- c) Good as good in the context of interaction with acting people

4. Modality

- a) Action as appearance thought of as permitted
- b) Action as appearance thought of as a duty
- c) Action as appearance thought of as a perfect duty

- a) Possibly good
- b) Actually good
- c) Necessarily good /207/

Principles of practical reason applied to appearances as the possible result of freedom

1. Quantity

All actions (as possibly good) stand under

- a) Maxims; and/or
- b) Practical precepts; and/or
- c) Practical laws.

2. Quality

All actions (as possibly good) stand under

- a) Rules of commission; or
- b) Rules of omission; or
- c) Rules of exceptions.

3. Relation

Actions (as possibly good) are only possible through the representation of a necessary connection of [those] actions.

- a) Underlying every action is a persisting subject (personality).
- b) Underlying every variation in actions is a variation in the state of the person.
- c) All subjects, insofar as they (or their actions) co-exist, stand in mutual interaction

4. Modality

- a) An action which agrees with the formal conditions of possibly good actions is *permitted*. An action which does not is *forbidden*.
- b) An action which coheres with the material conditions of possibly good actions is a *duty*. An action which conflicts with them is *contrary to duty*.
- c) An action whose coherence with duty is determined in accordance with universal conditions of possibly good actions is a *perfect duty*. An action which thereby is not perfectly determined, but is nevertheless a duty, is an imperfect duty.

a) *In general* (V 66, 11-15; 67, 1-8)

The categories of freedom are categories of practical reason in general (V 66, 12f). They are therefore not only categories of pure practical reason, but rather categories through which every appearance, if it is conceived as ‘caused’ through the will as a faculty of desire following concepts, must be thought to be determined. So whether the appearance (action) is performed after a pure practical principle or after an empirical-practical principle is (initially) put aside.

As follows from what Kant subsequently establishes, however, the totality of the categories is only necessary when an action is regarded with respect to its (possible) status as free. Kant distinguishes two different kinds of categories of practical reason, to wit: those which are morally undetermined and sensibly conditioned, and those which are morally determined and sensibly unconditioned (V 66, 13-15). If one reads the subsequent paragraph (V 67, 1-11) as a substantive explication of this foregoing distinction – and, as things appear, this is the most plausible interpretation – then it is category-groups 1-3 which belong to the first kind, and the categories of modality which correspond to the second kind.

I will first concern myself with the categories of groups 1-3. These categories are *morally undetermined*, in that the moral law plays no part in determining them, and therefore through them an action is not yet determined in respect of its morality (in its wider sense). So these categories lead only to practical principles in general (V 66, 9), that is, to principles which demand actions, but of which it at this point remains undetermined whether they are morally practical, technically practical, or mere subjective principles. The categories of groups 1-3 are *sensibly conditioned*, in that through them *actions as appearances in the sensible world* as effects of freedom become possible. It is thus the sensible world which requires these categories, so that with them free actions as appearances can be integrated in it. These categories are in this respect categories of the natural possibility of freedom (V 67, 4f).

An action which is conceptualized under the categories of groups 1-3 can thus, first, be thought as within the sensible world, caused through the will as “one of the many kinds of natural causes in the world” (V 172, 4f). Thus it is assured that the action can be integrated into the causal network /209/ of appearances. Second, it is not precluded that an action determined in this way be thought of as the result of a determination of the will through pure reason, through which the possibility of actions as effects of freedom is guaranteed.

At this point it seems to me worthwhile to go into a function of the categories of the first three groups which Kant himself does not specifically indicate, which, however, is sometimes mixed up in the literature with the function that Kant is dealing with here. This is a ‘theoretical’ function, in which the categories are not categories of freedom, and therefore not related to the moral law.

To simplify the following thought, for now the possibility of the condition of the will through pure practical reason, and thus of the possibility of freedom, will be put aside. The will is then still one amongst many natural causes, if also one which requires theoretical and technically practical reason. In this case it remains the function of the categories of groups 1-3 to explain actions as effects of the *setting of ends*. That is to say, the categories do not in this case serve to determine an action as practically bivalent [geltungsdifferent], but rather to facilitate an answer to the (theoretical) question of why this or that action qua ‘naturally event’ has taken place. For this purpose the categories provide the concept of *well-being*, as that which is effected

through the maxim (of commission, of omission, etc) of a person (in a certain state ...) when sensible impulses act as determining grounds, as well as the concept of *the useful* (the good-for-something), which is effected through a technically practical principle (of commission, etc, of a person, in a certain state ...) to the attainment of some end.

This secondary function of the categories as theoretical or technically practical concepts must be accurately distinguished from their function as the categories of freedom. For, to take an action that is contrary to duty as an example: this can, first, be *theoretically* explained, with the help of category-groups 1-3, as an action which is performed following a certain empirical principle. But it can also, second – if one relates the categories to the moral law – be *practically* determined, under the use of all four groups of the categories, as an evil action.

The relation of the categories of practical reason to *free* choice, stressed by Kant throughout the section on the categories, as well as the very designation of these categories as ‘categories of freedom’, show that Kant is only dealing here with the (morally) practical function of the categories – and also, objective reality was only proved for this function of the categories. On the other hand, a theoretical explanation of actions as appearances must always *also* be possible in principle, in order for the causal schema within the ‘world of appearances’ not to be violated. This double function of the categories /210/ of practical reason corresponds to the double determinability of the will both through sensibility as well as through pure reason. And this double function is necessary for the possibility of freedom in the ‘world of appearances’, because there one and the same action is to be determined in two different ways, namely theoretically and practically.

b) *Remarks on individual categories and principles* (V 66, 19-31)

It was assumed above that the sensibly conditioned and morally undetermined categories (V 66, 13f) are those of the first three groups of categories, since this classification is suggested by Kant’s explications in the following section (V 67, 1-9). But the determinations ‘morally undetermined’ and ‘sensibly conditioned’ are not immediately apparent for all the categories of these groups. Therefore, in the context of the explanation of individual categories and principles of this first kind, difficulties and possible objections regarding the aforementioned classification shall be discussed.

There is the following problem with the determination ‘morally undetermined’. The categories of quality, of relation, and the first two categories of quantity contain no specifically moral determinations and thus can serve equally for the explanation of occurrences of actions as determined through sensibility and for the constitution of actions as possibly good. In contrast, a problem emerges with the category of practical law. For this category, determined by Kant himself in the table as “a priori objective as well as subjective principles of *freedom*” (V 66, 23; emphasis mine), contains – following Kant’s explication in the first paragraph of the *Critique of Practical Reason* – the moral law as a determining part.

Beck tries to solve this problem by assuming that Kant meant that “*in each family of categories* [...] the transition occurs from the concepts of practical reason in general or empirical practical reason to those of pure practical reason” (Beck, pp. 152-3, emphasis mine). Beck relies here on the last sentence before the table of categories. But neither in this sentence nor anywhere else is there talk of such a transition in each individual group of categories [“family of categories”]. And Beck himself has to admit that for Kant this transition only “actually occurs” in the first group of groups 1-3 (*ibid.*). Furthermore, such a transition also does not take place in the fourth group. Kant says that the categories of modality induce

the transition; he does not say that the transition is induced *in* the categories of modality (V 67, 8ff).¹⁰ It is in this respect plausible /211/ to read the last sentence before the table as parallel with the paragraph after the table, since then at least only the problem of the third category of quantity remains.

This problem is surmountable with the help of the following observation: what is at issue with the categories of quantity is the aspect of quantity alone, i.e. (the good) for one, many, or all,¹¹ and the concept of a practical law just is extensionally inseparable from validity [Gültigkeit] *for all*. So, for example, it is not discerned until a critique of practical reason that practical laws are always determined a priori. Indeed, a maxim is also always the maxim of a person, always a rule of commission, omission or exception, and nevertheless these aspects are not taken into account in the first group of categories – for if they were, they would not need to be listed in the remaining groups.

Another problem arises with the first category of relation, the category of personality. For even if it is plausible that this category is morally undetermined, one would think that it is sensibly unconditioned, not sensibly conditioned. For “personality” is determined by Kant to be a person “insofar as he belongs to the intelligible world,” and therefore even as “freedom and independence from the mechanism of the whole of nature” (V 87). In spite of this, the category of personality is (also) a condition of the sensible world, as the corresponding principle of relation, ‘underlying every action is persisting personality’, can make clear. For in order that *a sequence of appearances in time* can be conceptualized as an *action*, it must be underlain by a personality, i.e. a faculty of reason as ‘agent’ [Handlungsträger]], that persists in this sequence of appearances. The entire sequence of appearances must be thought of as standing under, and being performed following, the maxim of action of a personality, for it to be possible that the moral predicates ‘good’ or ‘evil’ can apply to it.

Also in need of explanation is the second category of relation, or the corresponding principle ‘underlying every variation in actions is a variation in the state of the person.’ What should be understood here by the state of the person? Beck names three possibilities: “moral condition, physical condition, or the state of well-being and its opposite” (p. 148). Since the categories should make an action as appearance in the sensible world comprehensible, and “the state of the person” appears alone as category, without further determination, it seems to me that picking (only) *one* of Beck’s possibilities does not make sense. Rather, Kant meant by “state of the person” the entire situation in which the person finds herself, regarded as the starting point for the relevant action. Apart from /212/ the person’s physical and psychological states – where the latter includes the maxims the person holds as valid, whether they are moral or not – it would also include a large variety of existing influences from the relevant environment of the person. The possibility of action as the consequence of freedom thereby remains guaranteed through the possibility of the acceptance of moral maxims.

Beck sets the category ‘state of the person’ in a direct relation to basic ethical concepts (p. 148). However, in my view this cannot have been intended by Kant already in the list of categories as constituent aspects of an appearance as possible good, but rather belongs at best in the (dogmatic) doctrine of virtue, for which the application of the categories is suggested by Kant himself as useful (V 67). This is, however, only an *additional* function of the categories.

¹⁰ Benton, who holds that the transition is given only in the third pair of modal categories, also overlooks this. See Benton, pp. 185-6.

¹¹ Benton also suggests a corresponding interpretation: compare Benton, p. 187.

The third category of relation and the corresponding principle needs no more substantial explanation given what has been said about the second category. It is clear that in principle in the ‘world of appearances’, of which people and their actions constitute a part, the possibility of effects of the actions of a person on the state and actions of another person exists. (Since all simultaneously existing appearances stand in interaction with one another (III 180ff), in fact all simultaneously living people and their actions as appearances stand in interaction with one another indirectly.)

Categories and principles of modality (V 66, 14f & 32ff; 67, 8-11)

Kant says that the categories of modality “introduce, but only *problematically*, the transition from practical principles in general to those of morality” (V 67, 9f). An action that is thought of as determined through the groups of categories 1 to 3 reveals the concept of an appearance as determined through the causality of the will, i.e., an appearance which is ‘caused’ by means of a practical principle, where it remains open whether this principle is empirical or of pure reason. When an action is thought of as determined through the categories of modality, the practical principle which it stands under is judged in terms of its morality. The individual categories indicate the *modi* in which an action as appearance can stand in relation to the moral law. Depending on the kind of relation, it is a necessarily, actually or possibly good action. Thus, no further determining aspect is added to the concept of an action as appearance qua possible result of freedom. (Only its relation to pure practical reason is expressed.) The categories of modality are thus also *sensibly unconditioned* (V 66, 14). They are *determined through the moral law* (V 66, 15), since the moral law /213/ is a determining part of them. (This is explained in detail below.) The categories of quantity, quality and relation assured that certain appearances can be conceptualized as free in the negative sense, as the consequence of something which is not a natural cause. The categories of modality now make it possible to apply the positive concept of freedom (of the autonomy of pure practical reason) to appearances. Hence, one can say that the categories of groups 1 to 3 constitute a necessary condition (*conditio sine qua non*) for the practical bivalence [Geltungsdifferenz] of an action as appearance, but that only the categories of modality constitute a sufficient condition (*conditio sufficiens*) for this.

It is not immediately evident from the text how exactly Kant arrives at the concepts of the permissible, of duty, of perfect duty and the corresponding correlative concepts as practical categories of modality. Hence it is alleged in the literature that Kant has determined these categories only arbitrarily, that discrepancies with other Kantian passages in which these concepts are employed arise,¹² or that he has in part chosen the wrong concepts.¹³ However, if one forms practical principles for these categories which formally correspond to the respective theoretical principles, as was suggested above, then it can be shown that there are systematic grounds which lead to the formulation of precisely the categories which Kant provides and their correlates:

¹² E.g. Beck, pp. 149f.

¹³ Benton assumes that the Kantian categories of modality are *really* those a) of technical-practical reason, b) of the juridical, and c) of the ethical, and, in addition, that with the third pair of modal categories – in contrast to the first two – Kant provides two positive concepts and no negative correlative concept (Benton, pp. 189-192). Yet Benton remains at a loss for a compelling explanation as to why Kant chose the names that are given in the table of categories instead of those suggested by Benton, and as to why Kant would have allowed such a clear formal irregularity in the third pair of modal categories.

- a) The first practical principle of modality would have to read: ‘an action which agrees with the formal conditions of possibly good actions is *permitted*’. What are these formal conditions? The formal conditions of experience are the categories of understanding and the forms of intuition (III 185ff). The categories of understanding correspond to the categories of practical reason. The forms of intuition must, following the parallel that Kant draws in the paragraph before the table of categories, correspond to the moral law *as the form of pure will* (see above). An action which agrees with the moral law as the form of practical law would thus be permitted; one which does not agree with it, or conflicts with it, would be forbidden.¹⁴

/214/ In line with the principle determined in this way, there is the account of permission in the preface to the *Critique of Practical Reason*: “that which harmonizes [...] with a merely *possible* practical precept” (e.g., engaging in geometry or mechanics) (V 11, 10ff). Kant names the second morally relevant condition already in the *Groundwork*: “an action that can coexist with the autonomy of the will is *permitted*” (IV 439, 26f). By contrast to the positive determination of the permitted through the principle of modality, the determination in the *Metaphysics of Morals* – “that action is *permitted (licitum)* which is not contrary to obligation” (VI 222, 27f) – is obtained negatively, as the contradictory opposite to the concept that is the contrary opposite to that of duty, i.e. the concept of being contrary to duty. Extensionally, the determination in the *Metaphysics [of Morals]* matches that of the principle of modality.

- b) Parallel to the second postulate of empirical thinking, the second practical principle of modality must read: ‘an action which (in addition to its agreement with the formal conditions) coheres with the material conditions of possibly good actions is a *duty*’. Following the parallel Kant draws in the paragraph before the table of categories (see above), these material conditions should be – correspondingly to “perception and whatever is appended to it in accordance with empirical laws” (III 190, 16-18 [A226/B273]) – the moral law as fact (as a law of reason, the unconditional obligatory character of which we have immediate awareness of, and which is therefore also in a way the immediately “given”), as well as the practical laws that issue from it. ‘An action coheres with the material conditions’ can then be understood as ‘there is a practical law of reason that is valid [geltend] due to the moral law, under which this action stands’. Thus, mere agreement with the moral law is supplemented here by *coherence* with the moral law, which consists in the awareness of the *obligatory* character of the moral law embodied in certain practical laws; that is to say, that we know that there actually are practical laws to which we are obligated in our actions through the moral law.¹⁵

The determination of the preface of the *Critique of Practical Reason* again agrees with this, in saying that what is really good is that which agrees /215/ with a law that *really* lies in reason (V 11, 12f), if

¹⁴ Thus, the category of the permitted does not determine – as Beck assumes (p. 149) – an action as possibly good with respect to the attainment of an *arbitrarily chosen* purpose, but rather is already a *moral* (in the wider sense) determination of action.

¹⁵ The awareness of the validity (Geltung) of practical laws is also awareness of the obligatory or imperatival character of these laws, since the actions here are actions as appearances, and therefore the actions of *sensible-rational* beings (humans). For with sensible-rational beings there is always the possibility of empirical influences of inclinations or desires as the determining factor of action (see, e.g., V 32); commanded actions are not necessarily performed. Thus there is also an empirical aspect in the category, or the principle, of duty, as something which has to be overcome, and therefore as a negative determining part.

one understands this such that the laws which really lie in reason are precisely the laws which have their validity [Geltung] through the moral law as fact.

- c) Just as necessity, in the third postulate of empirical thinking, must be determined in dependence on the actual, so must perfect duty, in the third practical principle of modality, be determined in dependence on duty. The principle then reads: ‘an action whose coherence with duty is determined in accordance with the universal conditions of possibly good actions is a *perfect duty*’. Since the parallelism of the third theoretical and third practical principle of modality is more complex than that of the first two, it will be elaborated via the determination of the (theoretical) category of necessity. A formal determination of the category of necessity is found in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (III 96, 11ff [A226/B278ff]), where that which is necessary is that the existence of which is given through possibility.* In the place of ‘universal conditions’ – as in the fully formulated principle in the *Critique of Pure Reason* [A218/B266] – the topic here is possibility, and thus so far only the formal conditions. In parallel to this, an action would be a perfect duty if it is determined through the categories of practical reason and the moral law alone as a duty.

Now for the cognition of the necessity of a theoretical object it is required that, in addition to the formal conditions of theoretical objects:

- i) The cause of this object is given (real)
- ii) The corresponding empirical causal law is known (III 193f).

It is plausible that, correspondingly, in the case of the category of perfect duty, it likewise cannot be derived from formal conditions alone (the categories of practical reason and the moral law as the form of pure will) that a particular action is a duty. To the formal conditions must be added:

- i) The aspect of practical reality (from the concept of duty)
- ii) Particular ‘empirical’ practical laws.

Fully formulated, the principle of perfect duty would then read: ‘an action whose coherence with duty (i.e. its ought-to-be-done-ness) is fully determined according to the formal and material conditions of possibly good actions as appearances, as well as according to particular practical laws (of reason) ‘derived’ from these [conditions], is a *perfect duty*’.

It remains to demonstrate that the actions determined thus as duties are precisely those which Kant determines as perfect duties elsewhere, with other determining aspects. This can be shown without difficulties, if one makes use of the (extensional) equivalence of the concepts perfect duty and duty of right on the one hand, and imperfect duty and duty of virtue /216/ on the other hand (see, e.g., VI 240). Those practical laws through which *specific actions* become duties always specify duties of right, and that is perfect duties. By contrast, those practical laws which make the setting of specific ends duties specify (only) duties of virtue, and that is imperfect duties. Through the latter, the actions which ought to be done are in themselves not sufficiently determined, and it remains up to the acting subject, within certain limits, through which actions to try to achieve the commanded end (IV 388ff). According to the principle established above, it is now, under the presupposition of the aforementioned universal conditions, ‘*comparative a priori*’ knowable that an action is a duty if,

* Translator’s note: here ‘possibility’ marks ‘possible experience’; see A227/B280ff.

without taking into account the particular concrete situation in which one faces the decision whether or not to perform this action, one can recognize that one is in every such decision situation obligated to perform this action – i.e., if this *action* is to be done under all circumstances. And this is the case precisely when by a categorical imperative this action is in itself immediately commanded (to be done), and that is when this action is a duty of right, or a perfect duty.¹⁶

It is thus evident, both from this proof, and from the previously described generation of the third practical category of modality out of the first two, why Kant understands an action that is a perfect duty as a necessarily good action.

Thereby, Beck's objection, that the third practical pair of categories of modality does not – like the remaining third categories – arise out of the relation of the corresponding first and second categories, but rather instead “from a logical division of the second,” and thus gives rise to “a real surprise” (p. 150), is also shown to be mistaken. For, first, due to the fact that the third pair of categories is coextensive with the positive concept of the second pair of categories, it does not follow that the former arises from a “division” of the latter concept.¹⁷ Second, as was shown, the concept of /217/ perfect duty can be generated out of the first two categories through the [corresponding] principles. And it is no counterargument that this is not itself evident from the third category itself, for likewise with the (theoretical) category of necessity, this is comprehensible with respect to the concepts of experience only by means of the principles of modality.

It can now also be explained why Kant says that the categories of modality lead only *problematically* to pure practical principles (V 67, 8ff). For even if the concepts of perfect duty and of duty of right as well as those of imperfect duty and of duty of virtue are co-extensional, still no determining part of possible external lawgiving, nor of an end which is at the same time a duty, is given through the pair of categories of perfect and imperfect duty. For this purpose the distinction between external and inner exercise of the faculty of choice is required, and this distinction is not an object of a *critique* of practical reason.¹⁸ Hence by means of the categories of modality alone, particular practical principles cannot yet be designated as pure practical principles. Thus, they lead only problematically to principles of morality. The *dogmatic* exposition of such principles (V 67, 11) is performed by Kant only in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, on the basis of the aforementioned distinction between external and inner exercise of the faculty of choice.¹⁹

¹⁶ So also W. Kersting, in ‘Das starke Gesetz der Schuldigkeit und das schwächere der Gültigkeit, Kant und die Pflichtenlehre des 18. Jahrhunderts’ [‘The strict law of culpability and the weaker law of validity: Kant and the doctrine of duty of the 18th century’], *Studia Leibnitiana*, XIV, 1982, pp. 184-220: “the Kantian qualification of imperfect duty is not to be understood as a limitation in validity that affects the concept of duty itself [...] but rather as the absence of a determination of the action by a law of duty” (p. 203). “The principle of ethics is an end-determining law of duties of execution which must leave the domain of action undetermined, and which thus cannot *attribute the predicates of practical necessity* to the individual actions of execution *qua actions*” (p. 219, my emphasis).

¹⁷ Quite generally, one must separate extensional consideration from intensional consideration of the categories. If the third category is constructed from the first two, nothing at all is thereby said about the extensional relation. With the categories of quality, for example, the extensions of all three categories are mutually exclusive; with the categories of quantity the third overlaps with the first and second, without the extension of the second being contained in the extension of the first; with the categories of relation at least the first two are coextensive: they cover all possible actions.

¹⁸ C.f. V 8, 12ff; VI 229-231; VI 379-381.

¹⁹ Cf. also III 21f, where the dogmatic method is understood by Kant as a necessary method of a thorough metaphysics as a science, which can only be performed following a critique (of the corresponding faculty of reason).

With the help of the principles of modality one can also give a principle, following which Kant could have determined the [negative] category correlated to each positive modal category. The most easily conceivable principle, which several authors would have liked to see applied, namely to choose the contradictorily opposite concept in each case,²⁰ does obviously not apply to the second and third pairs of categories. To facilitate understanding, an extensional consideration of the modal categories of practical reason will be presented. Schematically, the extensional relation can be represented as follows:

Category-pair	a)	permitted		forbidden
	b)	duty		contrary to duty
	c)	perfect duty	imperfect duty	non-duty

- Extension of the positive concept
- Extension of the negative concept
- Remaining undetermined domain

/218/ By means of the principles, the domains of the pairs of opposites – as apparent from the schema – can then be explained as follows:

- a) The entire domain designated by this [first] pair of categories is determined through the *formal conditions* of possibly good actions. It is the domain of *actions*. Within this domain – which is identical with that which is determined through the groups of categories 1 to 3 – the pair of categories provides an exhaustive bipartition.
- b) The domain designated by the second pair of categories is determined through the *material conditions* specified in the second principle. It is the domain of alternatives for action for which there are binding imperatives, that is, the domain of *deeds*.²¹
- c) The entire domain designated by this third pair of categories is, corresponding to the third principle, determined through the *coherence of duty with the universal conditions*; it is the domain of actions (deeds) which are duties. Thus, this pair of categories too provides an exhaustive bipartition within its domain.²²

It can therefore be generally ascertained that the relevant negative correlative concept can be formed following the rule that the corresponding principle [Grundsatz] is to achieve an exhaustive bipartition within the domain over which it ranges. Thereby, the domain of application of the pairs of categories shrinks from a) to c). Also, the extension of the positive concepts decreases from a) to c), and it holds that the necessary is always actual, the actual is always possible, that is, perfect duty is always duty and duty is always permitted. Such a regular pattern does not hold with the negative correlative categories: that which is contrary to duty is not imperfect duty; the forbidden and that which is contrary to duty are co-extensional. Is this really to be regarded as a defect or an inconsistency of the group of modal categories? I think

²⁰ Cf. Beck, p. 150.

²¹ C.f., e.g., VI 223, 18f. Whether the domain of actions actually is larger than that of deeds is insignificant.

²² As Kant's comments on the postulates of empirical thinking show, the pair of categories 'necessary/contingent' also extensionally fill precisely the domain of the positive concept of the second pair of categories, i.e. that of the actual. For the contingent is for Kant in this case that which contingently exists (III 199).

not. For it would surely have been no problem for Kant to introduce counter-concepts that are contradictories to ‘duty’ and ‘perfect duty’, that is to produce the concepts ‘non-duty’ and ‘non-perfect-duty’. There are (at least) two plausible reasons for *not* introducing these concepts as the correlative concepts. First, the contradictory concepts are *implicitly given with* the positive concepts. Second, the aforementioned contradictory concepts are *morally irrelevant*. For if I know, for example, that something is a ‘non-duty’, I do not yet thereby know whether I may do it /219/ or whether I must or should not do it. By contrast, when I know that something is contrary to a duty, I know that I must not do it.

In summary, it can be said that the modal categories of practical reason seem in no way arbitrarily chosen, but rather seem to be constructed systematically consequent, if one seeks to understand them by means of practical principles of modality generated in parallel to the theoretical principles.

The categories of practical reason as guides to practical philosophy as a science (V 67, 12-23)

After what has been said up to now, it should be sufficiently clear that Kant is *not*, in the last paragraph of the second chapter before the ‘Typic’ (V 67, 12-23), indicating the *main* function of the categories of practical reason when he writes that “a division of this kind, drawn up in accordance with principles, is very useful in any science,” and that one may survey through the table of categories “the whole plan of what has to be done, every question of practical philosophy that has to be answered, and also the order that is to be followed.” Kant is here indicating only an *additional* area in which the categories are of application, i.e. that they can methodologically and systematically provide a guide for practical philosophy as a science.

A beginning towards the consideration of this function of methodical ordering can be found in §1 (and also in §§2-4) of the *Critique of Practical Reason*, where Kant commences with an exposition and investigation of the categories of practical reason of quantity (maxim, practical rule, practical law), though without marking them as categories. In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, however, Kant then apparently does not following this guide (further).²³

However, by no means does the fact that the formal structure of the *Metaphysics of Morals* does not follow the order of the categories of freedom diminish or even annul the philosophically important achievement of these categories – to make it possible [i] that actions as appearance are the result of freedom, and thereby [ii] that they are practically bivalent [geltungsdifferent – i.e. can be good or evil] and [iii] for us to have the concept of actions as practically bivalent [geltungsdifferent].

For, in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, the categories of practical reason are *passim* applied and thereby show the fulfillment of their function ‘through the deed’./220/²⁴

²³ C. Chr. E. Schmid already makes such an attempt for one part of the *Metaphysics of Morals* in 1795 in his *Grundriß des Naturrechts* [‘Foundations of Natural Right’], (Frankfurt/Leipzig), esp. §24ff.

²⁴ However, it seems doubtful to me whether Kant applies the categories of practical reason in the passages indicated by Beck (p.144 n. 30, i.e. IV 436; Doctrine of Right §4; VI 101). In all three cases, there seems to be, rather, an application of the categories of *understanding* to practical or theological areas – which is warranted by the fact that according to Kant these categories, qua mere forms of thought, (necessarily) underlie *all* our thoughts.